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SUBJECT: TURKEY: IT'S OFFICIAL: FM GUL ANNOUNCES HIS  
PRESIDENTIAL BID

REF: ANKARA 2072

11. (U) FM Abdullah Gul submitted his presidential candidacy to parliament's new Speaker on August 14, formally opening his bid for the job as the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) sole candidate. After meeting with several opposition leaders, Gul told a press conference that, as president, he would uphold the constitution and strengthen the basic principles of the Turkish Republic. He pointedly recited the key constitutional provisions describing Turkey as a democratic, secular, social state governed by the rule of law. He called the constitution his guide and promised to work for Turkey's unity. He pledged to remain impartial, if elected, and to embrace and protect all Turks in accordance with Turkey's constitution. Noting that he understands the "sensitivities" of state institutions, Gul said he would ensure they work harmoniously.

12. (U) Gul told the press he could not ignore the people's message of support. He had consulted with his family and his colleagues, including PM Erdogan, and felt obliged to keep his campaign promise to run. He met with Nationalist Action Party (MHP) chair Devlet Bahceli earlier and would meet with other Turkish leaders, including labor organizations, in the coming days. Although Republican People's Party (CHP) officials declined Gul's request for an appointment and have strongly opposed his candidacy, Gul said he would try to earn the support of all members of parliament. He added that he would like to closely cooperate with CHP, along with other parties, if elected.

13. (U) Gul stressed that, as president, he would continue to support efforts to open Turkey to the outside world. He promised to work for greater democracy and respect for human rights, adding that he would promote Turkey's full EU membership.

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